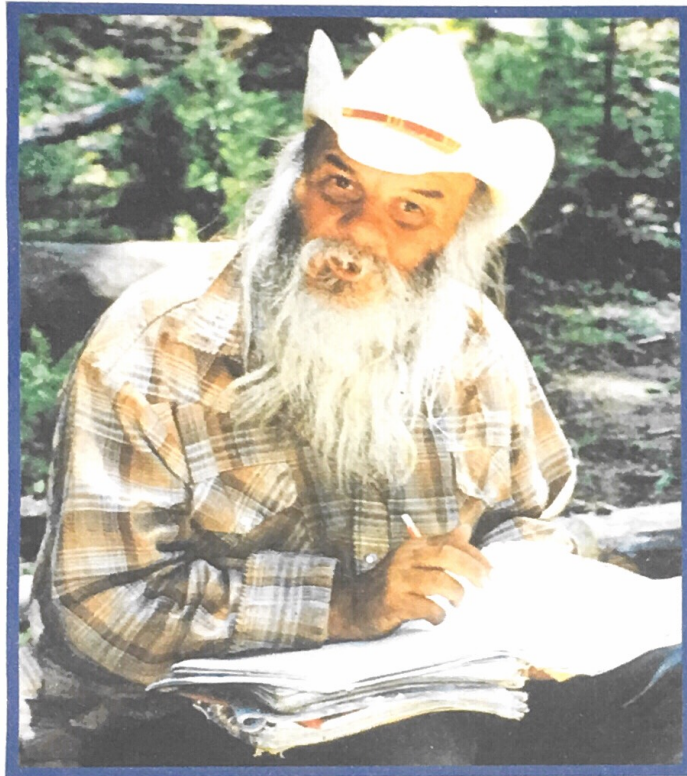




Rainbow Family

Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.*

*Scanned in 2018.
Jodey Bateman may be
contacted on Facebook.
or jodey.bateman@yahoo.com*

05. J

FEATHER "Herstory"

[4 of 4]

14 pages

[05. J]

arrested again.

When the case came to trial, we were allowed to bring in expert witnesses in the nuclear field - physicists, doctors, lab technicians who were allowed to speak of the dangers of radioactivity and the operation of the plant itself. Our defense was like that trespass by the demonstrators was a lesser evil. Like if the house burns down, is it a greater crime to break down the door to rescue people? The government has closed the plant down for several months now because of unsafe features.

Although we really loved being on Rainbow Farm with Garreck and Charlotte, we had to leave Oregon. Jay Sun was getting bursitis in his shoulder where he was hit in Nam - from working outside in the rain.

We had a pretty hard winter in New Mexico in some ways. In some ways it was pretty good. We learned a lot of lessons. We lost our baby when I was four months pregnant. I was just beginning to get big. I lost 20 pounds. I was vomiting blood. Our baby was supposed to be born deformed. So after much searching of hearts, and prayer to God we chose to have an abortion and give our baby back to him. But just because our baby might be deformed wouldn't mean that he wasn't going to be a high being with a place in the cosmos. And there was a chance of the child being born normal. Later, when our dog killed our baby chickens, it made me think back how I've had to deal so much with death in having babies. I have to get my spiritual thing together.

Every single person who goes to a gathering gets something different out of it. And it's different every year. Like the Oregon Gathering - some people said it was a farce, others said it was

great. I was disappointed that we didn't all pray together on the fourth, but otherwise it was great. I went to take Joy's place in Love Israel's council of chiefs of tribes. I went three times and the Love Family turned me away each time.

The Oregon Gathering felt like a lot of people were in the flow of helping the gathering happen, by sharing their shelters and sharing their food, the great majority of the people. In Oregon there were a whole lot of old families, spin-offs, from Haight Ashbury and the earlier era. It was heartening seeing Touch the Earth, one of those families bringing 500 pounds of Tofu to the gathering and the Inner Space Family digging the shitters.

[material added up
Tues on the summer
of 1989]

FEATHER
I remember at the Oregon Gathering it seemed there had never been a clear decision about if the next gathering site would be in Arizona or Washington. Henry the Fiddler put signs up on the trail saying "Next Year Arizona!"

That was an intense year, that's for sure. We ate alone maybe four nights between the 78 Gathering and the 79 Gathering. We put up with a lot and it definitely did strain our relationship. It was really hard. Both of us tried to be accommodating to everybody. There weren't enough good people to balance it out. Just free lunch people.

The New Mexico Gathering was lots mellower than the Arizona Gathering. Our landlord got plenty uptight about the gathering that there was the danger of all these Rainbow people moving in.

We did lots of delicate negotiations with the

with the town of Alpine and did a talk to the Chamber of Commerce to allay a lot of fears and then the first thing the early people did was rip off grocery stores after they walked in saying "We're Rainbows!"

One night I went out to our bus and this huge great horned owl was parked on top of the bus and then he flew to the top of the log cabin and then to the woodpile. And it kept flying in a triangle like that and it would fly right over my head within a foot or two of me. I felt no fear, but I felt definitely like it was trying to give me a message. I went in the cabin. Toufan was staying there. I told him about the owl outside and he freaked out and covered in the corner. When we had the Pruning of the Trees Council that April [1979], I found out that Bear had died and the owl had showed up right when Bear was dying in Austin.

When we tried to rent a place in Luna after the gathering, no one - absolutely no one - would rent to us, so we lived in a little cabin we rented in Alpine with our bus in back.

After I went to the West Virginia Gathering in 1980, we lived on the Blue River in Arizona and then we found the land in Pleasanton, New Mexico.

I thought the Washington Gathering in 1981 was really a beautiful site. We had a good time there and worked a lot with the media. The sickness in Washington was hard to deal with - so many people got sick, I started working at the medical tent. People were just laid out with the dysentery. We had had to build a special shelter. It was hard for people

to make it fair.

Jay Sun and I stayed with some folks in Spokane after the gathering. We hitched down as far as the Dalles on the Columbia River. I woke up crying. Jay Sun asked what was the matter. I said "I'm really not ready to leave the gathering yet."

So I convinced Jay Sun we had to go to Garrick's Farm and we hitched there. No sooner had we gotten to the farm, Garrick was ready to head to the camp in Idaho where people were scouting next year's gathering site. So we headed to Idaho with Garrick. We had some great adventures there. We climbed Rainbow Peak, went to the River of No Return Wilderness for a three-day adventure. Some arsonists set five fires in a circle around our camp. One of the fires burned 30 acres. Very soon after the fire, we moved camp to a hot springs and that's where we got a letter from Kuiz Kalkootl, a Mexican Indian healer, asking to meet us at the Palute-Shoshone Sun Dance in McDermott, Nevada.

Kuiz had met a woman who was traveling in Mexico with her eight year old son. The boy got a bad infection in his arm and they took her at a clinic that they would have to amputate the arm. So she left the clinic and she was standing in the street of this little village just praying for someone to help and a man walked up and said, "You must need a medicine man."

So he took her to see Kuiz and Kuiz healed her boy's arm. In 48 hours the boy was out playing ball, and she told Kuiz about the Rainbow Gathering.

While she was there, he had a dream that he was standing in front of a huge rainbow and an eagle flew under the rainbow towards him, circled his head and then flew back over the rainbow. This indicated to him that he was supposed to come to the gathering.

So he planned a tour of North America going to the various reservations and also to the Washington Rainbow Gathering. So on his way to the gathering, his car broke down. But he did make it to Uncle Billy's land in Washington State. Uncle Billy is an Indian medicine man. Tibor and Mickel had just gotten back from the gathering and they did a sweat with Uncle Billy and Kutz and Kutz did a healing on Tibor - his back.

During that time, Kutz had a vision of a deer and a peyote bird coming out of a fire and merging as one which to him indicated the spiritual merging of the South and North American continents. While they were at Uncle Billy's, Kutz said he wanted to meet some of the people who had been with the gathering from the beginning. So three letters were written.

So we left the night we got the letters. We drove straight through the night and arrived at sunset on the third day of the Sun Dance. It was Garrick, Ishay, Eden Star and Barry and Jayson and myself. Rome and Tibor and Mickel and Esupay and ten Rainbow people had come from Uncle Billy's and had been there fourteen days helping prepare for the Sun Dance. They had been working really hard hauling wood and water, helping out in the kitchen, gaining the respect and trust of the people there.

This was the third that they had had the Sun Dance on that land and they had never had non-Indian people there before. So Kuiz was the guest dancer. The elders held a sign and decided that must be a sign that it was time to allow non-Indians at the dance. Some of the more militant young people were upset about the decision and some of the medicine people had gotten sick right before the Sun Dance. The young people blamed that on the non-Indians.

When Kuiz arrived, he did healings on all the people who needed them. When we arrived, we went directly to the camp set up by the Rainbow crew and got filled in on the traditions of the Sun Dance and what we could and could not do. Say if we had washed our face, we couldn't just splash the water on the ground. We had to think of the dancers who were fasting from food and water for four days and we should pour the water on the ground and pray over it. Nothing could cross the eastern entrance of the dance arbor.

As soon as they had finished explaining it, the Indians in the Sun Dance security showed up. They asked for volunteers to work security at the front gate for the night and to help keep the sacred sweat fire burning all night and guard the eastern entrance to the arbor. Several of us eagerly volunteered and we were paired up with the Rainbow crew that had already been there. Jay Sun went to the front gate with Mickel. We had an amazing night.

In the arbor there was a man who had had a vision to be pierced and remain tethered to the tree of life for 24 hours. The next day, we went to the arbor

and it just so happened that we walked to the northern section where the white flag was. As we were watching the dancers, when Kuiz came out, I knew it was him - although I'd never seen him before. We felt we had prepared ourselves enough to watch a ceremony that was still extremely profound - the ritual of piercing.

The only way I can describe the Sun Dance is that it was one of the most intense emotional experiences of my life - like giving birth. During the afternoon of dancing, Kuiz pledged to dance for a young Indian woman who had been in an automobile accident six years before and was paralyzed from the waist down. His tether was the only one that had an eagle feather on it. After he was pierced, he danced up to the tree of life four times. After the fourth time, he sprang back and the flash broke. His tether arched like a bow and the eagle feather touched the tree of life. The second the feather touched the tree of life, the woman he pledged for said, "The feeling is coming back in my legs again."

That night there was a peyote ceremony held in two huge lodges near each other. Emerson Jackson, president of the Native American Church, led the ceremony in one lodge and Kuiz led it in another lodge. I sat between the two lodges, but at a respectful distance. In the morning as people were coming out of the lodges, a giant bald eagle flew over one of the lodges.

That afternoon Kuiz met us in his lodge. So Barry explained his vision that began the Rainbow. Then Garrick added some and Kuiz told us about his dream and invited us to a gathering in Mexico ^{the next} spring.

The winter after we got back from the Sun Dance, Jay Sun started working for Bechtel. It

seemed like it put a lot of strain on our relationship. There he was, working around a copper mine rapping the earth to make payments on his little piece of land and I think spiritually he couldn't handle it.

The spring of '82, thirteen of us went to Mexico, only one of us, Jodey, able to speak Spanish. Sid had flown down ahead of everyone else and brought down a paho - a prayer feather from the Hopis, from Grandfather David - to take to the ceremony. Originally a gathering of North, Central, and South American indigenous people had been planned by Ruiz to take place at the pyramids at Teotihuacan at the time of the great alignment of the planets and Grandfather David had given instructions that we were to place the paho on top of the pyramid just before dawn on the morning of the great alignment.

But, as it turned out, the Mexican government had not allowed the gathering to take place because the pyramids were tourist attractions. Sid couldn't get a hold of Ruiz when he got there, so he counselled with the Illuminated Elephants, an international theater group in Mexico, and they decided to go to a different pyramid.

... This was a really old pyramid which had trees growing on top of it. Sid climbed the pyramid before dawn and climbed a tree on the eastern most point and tied the paho to a tree and just before dawn a hawk came from the east and circled the pyramid and then flew back into the rising sun.

The trip to Mexico was incredible - really memorable. I think we had about \$81 for Jodey, Sun and Shawn and I

for 17 days in Mexico. Uncle River stayed back on our land with Grasshopper while we were gone. It was almost like we were on this big acid trip together - very magical and very intense at moments. We stayed with the Illuminated Elephants in Yautepex at this old place that had been a monastery and then a crematorium. It was really amazing co-creating a show called Obra de Paz with them. I had my first dramatic role ever. I was an English duck in the play.

We did a ceremony with Kuiz in Chapultepec Park after the play. I think he had heard of the paho Grandfather David sent. He asked what had happened to it. So Sid explained and then Kuiz said he had a gift from the Aztec people to be returned to the Hopis. And Sid said he wasn't going back by way of the Hopis. He said, "Why don't you give it to Feather?" She lives near Grandfather David and she sees him often."

I think Sid was testing Kuiz a little to see if he'd trust that gift to a woman. So Kuiz checked me out a little bit and feathered me off with an eagle feather and one of his assistants smudged me with incense. He held the gift towards me three times and the fourth time, he gave it to me.

It was a little tiny box about an inch wide and three inches long wrapped in ribbon the colors of the four directions. He explained to me that inside it was four pieces of corn the colors of the four directions, a piece of copal incense and a piece of obsidian. So he asked me to tell Grandfather David that this was a gift from his people to the Hopi people. He asked me to be sure the gift went from my hands to Grandfather David rather than sending it through the mail. It took two trips to Hopiland before we found him

home to help her.

At the Idaho Gathering, Elaine and Louis of the Illuminated Elephants and another brother named Damian were going up to Regina, Canada to the Fourth Annual Assembly of First Nations - First Nations meant Red Nations.

The Illuminated Elephants had been invited up there to dance, and they invited up there to dance and they invited other people to come there with them. So another Louis - a big, tall black brother, a beautiful brother, said he would take us there in his school bus. So a crew of us, including Garrick, Marib, Samra, Dorothy, Felice, T-OM and others volunteered to go help out.

[Jay Sun didn't go with Feather and the others to Canada]

FEATHER Elaine and her family went ahead of us in their station wagon. We followed behind in the school bus. We were quite a colorful crew and so was the bus, painted up in all sorts of hippie symbols and slogans. Everybody had to push the bus every time we started it. It was amazing that they let us through the border.

We arrived at the assembly in the middle of a huge, powerful thunderstorm in the night - sheets of rain. The road was really slippery. We slid off the road at the front gate and got stuck. We got it unstuck in the morning and pulled into the camp and set up two tipis.

This was a three fold gathering. There was a political gathering in the town of Regina - tribal chairmans like Peter McDonald. They were having workshops for \$55 on things like how to sign away your land rights and make the big pow-wow and then there was the

elder's camp where we stayed. There were between 8,000 and 10,000 Native Americans, mostly from Canada and the north plains, at the powwow and the elder's camp. Different medicine people were giving workshops and holding cornells and a group of AIM brothers and sisters who had been walking 200 miles across Canada in support of Native American religious freedom in prisons - like sweat lodges - and freedom for Leonard Peltier.

The AIM folks walked the last 22 miles of their journey to the prison. Four of us walked with them - Garrick Sarra, Nat and myself. In order to cover 22 miles in six hours, we walked at a pretty fast clip with the tallest, longest-legged braves at the front setting the paces. I had gotten poison oak all over my legs from picking blueberries the day before for Maribah Pie's for Peace, and the only shoes I had were flip-flops.

Most of the time I was trying barefoot to keep up with every body. When we got to the prison, the superintendent came out and allowed the sacred pipe to be taken in and said they would start allowing Native American prisoners to do sweat lodge ceremonies. Some of the people stayed and did an all night candle light vigil.

I went back with some of the others because there there was supposed to be a sisters' circle at the camp with one of the medicine people, and I was really interested. Next morning there were about 40 Native women there. I was the only non-Indian.

Among the women there was a young woman who

had come to our camp and demanded that we stop drumming and playing music at night. She said that we were insulting the elders. I was reminded of the I Ching throwing we had done - the darkening of the light, which I thought meant we should be very careful not to show disrespect.

When it was that young woman's turn to speak, she expressed a lot of anger and hatred for whites - us in specific. The elder who was watching the sisters' circle said that when she was young, she too had intense hatred for whites, but she had met some white women who taught her that not all whites were bad and it was just as bad to be racist towards whites as for whites to be racist towards Indians.

The great majority of women in the circle expressed their pain about alcohol abuse - either by their parents, their husbands or themselves. A few of them who had been alcoholics told how they had come from the depths of despair by finding their medicine again and getting on a spiritual path. The elder spoke about the importance of fasting, prayer and the ceremonies and to love and respect yourself and your tradition.

When it was my turn to speak, I talked about how much it had helped me the first time I had fasted for a week and how much strength it had given me. I invited all the women to come share Pies For Peace with us at our camp.

That night was the last night of the powwow. We got there in time for the grand entry when

Everyone walks around the arena with their costumes on. Although there had been some friction between the elders and the young AIM people, one of the elders took the microphone and asked everyone to give honor to the young people who had walked and he asked everyone who wished to join him in the honor song. The drummers went into the center and a few singers - then more and more until finally the arena was filled with thousands of singers singing the honor song. It was an incredibly touching experience.

We'd been at our camp baking pies for days. The next morning we had a ceremony to bless and share pies for peace. A medicine man named Bobby Woods came. One of the elders gave a prayer in her traditional tongue to bless the food. There was a woman sun dancer from the Black Hills who gave us a vision she had had of a women's sun dance some time in the future with women of all races. The young woman who had been so angry with us was smiling and laughing and enjoying Pies for Peace. We left with the AIM people having a better feeling for us.

[Soon after Feather returned to New Mexico from Canada, she broke up with JaySun.]

The abortions were a big part of the strain that led to our breakup, but the infidelity was even more. I tried to be free and let love flow and be more open in our relationships, but neither of us knew how to do it, because both of us came from conventional families. Our parents are close to their fiftieth anniversaries.

[After the 1985 Missouri Gathering, Feather lived for a while with a man named Bradley. Feather

(130)

became pregnant by him, but then she broke up with him. In 1986 she gave birth to a daughter named Angel.]

(131)

FEATHER I think even in the time of my first abortion, it was Angel in a spirit form knocking on my door. I had a dream about a little girl who looked like Angel after my first abortion and I always hoped and prayed that she'd come back. At the 1983 Regional Gathering in New Mexico, Sunny saw a female spirit around me and I felt Angel's presence off and on ever after that.

[Feather and Angel went to the Nevada Gathering in the summer of 1989 and as of September 1989, they are living in Flagstaff, Arizona where Feather is going to college so she can be an art teacher again.]